



# TEACHERS' RESOURCES

## RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary and lower secondary

## CONTENTS

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Plot summary                   | 1 |
| 2. About the author               | 2 |
| 3. Author's inspiration           | 2 |
| - Characters                      |   |
| 4. Themes, Questions & Activities | 3 |
| 5. Further reading                | 5 |
| 6. Order form                     | 6 |

## KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English, the Arts, Health & Physical Education; Humanities & Social Sciences.
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, critical & Creative Thinking; Personal & Social Capability; Ethical Understanding; Intercultural Understanding.
- **Cross-curriculum priorities:** Asia & Australia's Engagement with Asia.

## REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- To help learn about some of the issues in the transition to high school
- Learn about navigating changing friendships

## THEMES

- High School Transition
- Identity/Belonging
- Friendships
- Comic book world
- Family
- Music

## PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

## PUBLICATION DETAILS

ISBN: 9780143306535 (paperback);  
9781742538181 (ebook)

**These notes may be reproduced free of charge for use and study within schools but they may not be reproduced (either in whole or in part) and offered for commercial sale.**

Visit [penguin.com.au/teachers](http://penguin.com.au/teachers) to find out how our fantastic Penguin Random House Australia books can be used in the classroom, sign up to the teachers' newsletter and follow us on [@penguinteachers](https://twitter.com/penguinteachers).

Copyright © Penguin Random House Australia  
2017



## Super Con-nerd

Oliver Phommavanh

## PLOT SUMMARY

**Our favourite character from *Con-nerd* returns in *Super Con-nerd***

*Hi, I'm Connor and I'm a nerd. I thought I knew all there was to being one. But there are better nerds out there. Super nerds. Hyper nerds. Super, hyper nerds. I thought all nerds were smart. But that's not true, because suddenly I don't feel so bright anymore. The competition to get into this high school was intense but it's even tougher on the inside. And when I need my old friends, they all seem to have moved on. Can I do well enough to make my family proud, make new friends and still have time to for my real destiny – drawing comic books?*

Full of his signature laugh-out-loud humour, Oliver Phommavanh delivers a funny and insightful take on starting high school in his follow-on book from *Con-nerd*.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

OLIVER PHOMMAVANH is a Thai-Australian writer who has worked as a primary school teacher and comedian, and now spends his time writing and sharing his passion with kids, engaging them with humour.

His first book, *Thai-riffic!*, was published to critical acclaim, followed by *Con-nerd*, *Punchlines*, *Thai-no-mite*, *Ethan* in the 'Stuff Happens' series, and most recently, *The Other Christy*.

Visit Oliver at his website:

[www.oliverwriter.com](http://www.oliverwriter.com)

## AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

*Super Con-nerd* is about Connor's transition into high school. It's challenging enough being in a new school and making new friends. But Connor is going into a selective school, where kids have to pass an entrance exam. Connor would have been one of many, who were tutored for this exam. Other kids would have passed regardless because they were naturally gifted. Either way, I like to think that a selective school would be made up of kids who were bright or top of their class or grade in primary school. They can't all be number one when they reach selective school. So what happens when someone who is used to being at the top of their grade is suddenly average? That's one of Connor's dilemmas in *Super Con-nerd*.

I did try out for a selective school but I never made it in. So I had to imagine what it'd be like to be inside a school where everybody is supposedly smart. Connor realises he's not as smart as the other kids. He wants to be a 'super nerd' to catch up, but at the same time, he doesn't want to have to resort to going back to tutoring. I love this idea of powering up to the next level and being 'super'. One of my favourite animes, Dragonball Z has Goku turning into a Super-Saiyan. Sonic the Hedgehog can also go super too. So calling it *Super Con-nerd* was a no brainer.

*Super Con-nerd* also explores the changing nature of friendships. Connor had a tight knit group back in primary school, and now he's seeing his friends move on in their high schools. I tried to stay in touch with my primary school friends in Year Seven, and we did try to hang out once a month, but in the end we just grew apart.

While Connor does make some new friends and cooks up a new comic series, he wonders if he can still keep his old ones. I started to imagine what would happen if Connor's two groups of friends actually met. I was inspired by the showdown seen in an old episode of *Seinfeld* where Elaine's new 'bizarro' friends meet the original gang. More recently, I pictured Captain America's Civil War, where two groups of heroes battled against each other.

## Characters

**Connor:** Connor is lost in high school. It takes him a while to find his groove, just like many kids who start high school. Connor also has a little self-doubt, wondering if he really belongs in a selective school. There's a part of me in Connor. I always wanted to show my creations to friends at high school. I created my own video game magazines and comic books. They were mostly stick figures, but they had pretty funny dialogue. I also got the same pressure from my parents during high school.

**Mandy:** Connor's best friend and neighbour, they've had an enduring friendship that is being tested when they go to different high schools. Mandy's music tastes are as fickle as anything in the pop world, she's over Jason Bobo and now likes 500 Years of Winter, referencing a famous Australian rock band. Mandy is loosely based on one of my teacher uni friends, who packs a punch too.

**Stephen and Dazza:** Connor's two sporty friends are thriving in their high schools, but they still respect Connor as a cool nerd because of his talent for drawing comics (ones that featured them). Even so, in *Super Con-nerd* Stephen & Dazza are not always there for Connor when he needs them the most.

**The nerdy rejects:** I wanted to touch upon the different sub cultures that exist under the nerd umbrella. While being a nerd is mainstream these days, there are still many activities that are still considered too nerdy and are on the fringes of popular culture. I wanted each of the nerdy rejects to have those types of interests.

**Vinh:** He is inspired by a friend of mine who is a cosplayer and enters competitions. I sat down with the real life Vinh and asked him about life as a cosplayer. It gave me some insights into why people cosplay, as well as the dedication that it takes to make your own costume.

**Irene:** She is based on a friend who works for a major video game company who have created some



of the biggest e-sports in the world. Irene wants to be an e-sports commentator, just like one of my friends, and it's such an awesome spectacle to see!

**Galway:** He's another person based on a high school friend of mine who likes painting models in the Warhammer series.

**Andrew:** I've met kids like Andrew, as a teacher and fellow classmate. They're know-it-alls who think they're superior to everybody else. I like the idea of Andrew being a villain who steals other heroes' powers. That's why Andrew forces Connor to teach him how to draw. I also wanted to give Andrew a reason for being so ruthless when it comes to schoolwork.

**Connor's mum:** She's mellowed a bit since *Con-nerd*, but it doesn't stop her worrying about Connor. She still wants him to be near the top of the class. I loved having her being more involved in Connor's comic book drawings, so she can better understand his passion for making a career as an artist.

## THEMES, QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

### High school transition

*For Grade 5/6 students.*

- What do you think high school will be like?
- Where could you get your ideas about high school? (Siblings, friends, relatives, teachers, TV/media etc)
- Alternatively, you can list all possible influences (Siblings, friends, relatives, teachers, TV/media, parents etc) and find out if they are effective for finding information about high school. Who would be a major influence?
- Make a list of what scares you about high school. Also make a list of things that worry you and things you're looking forward to.
- Beside those things that scare or worry you about high school, what are some things you could do or someone you could talk to to help you work through those issues?
- What is Connor looking forward to at Kentworth? What are his expectations for high school?
- What are things you'd like to know or find out before you reach high school?

*For Grade 7 students*

- How can you relate to Connor?
- Compare the first week and month of high school. Did much change? Now compare with Connor's experience at school.
- Are there any things you wished you knew before you went to high school?
- What are some parts of starting high school that you found challenging?
- What are the parts of starting high school that you really enjoyed?
- Make a brochure/pamphlet with some tips to surviving the first week of high school.

### Identity/belonging

- Compare Connor's personality in *Con-nerd* and *Super Con-nerd*. In what ways has he changed?
- Connor wants to be a super nerd. What does that mean to you?
- Why doesn't Connor feel like he belongs at Kentworth?
- Andrew says that Connor isn't 'Kentworthy?' to be at their school. Do you agree? Why/why not?
- How do you react to Andrew when you first meet him in the story? Does your opinion change by the end of the book? Why?
- Vinh mentions that he likes to do cosplay and pretend to be someone else. If you could be a comic book/video game/book character, what would you be?

### Friendships

- Do you think you'll be friends with your favourite schoolmates next year/in two years? How about in 5 years? 10 years? 20 years? 50 years?
- What are some of the reasons why friendships fall apart? What can you do if that happens? How could you prepare for that?
- Do you think friendships have an expiry date?
- Mandy stops hanging out with her old best friend because they're in separate schools. How can you make a friendship work if you're in different schools/cities/countries?
- Outside of school, where else can you make friends?



- Create a diagram with the friendship groups you have in your life. Are there any groups that overlap? What would happen if you had a birthday party and invited everyone, would each group get along?
- Think about the nerdy rejects. How did they become friends? What are their common interests?
- Compare the nerdy rejects and original C gang with a Venn diagram, what are their differences/similarities? Which group do you think would be better suited for Connor? Why?
- Connor tells Galway that he can join the nerdy rejects because they need a 'tanks expert'. What could you be the expert in? What are you passionate about?
- What do you think about Andrew needing to win or come first at any cost? Why is he so driven to succeed?
- Have a discussion/debate: Do you need tutoring to be excellent at schoolwork? Is there anything wrong with using study notes and 'revids' (study review videos)?

### Comic book world

- Make your own version of *Hyper Hybrids*, designing your own alien self. What kind of powers could you have? Which home planet could you come from?
- Create a crossover comic where two groups of heroes face off against each other. What could they be fighting over?
- Design your own cosplay costume. What kind of materials would you use? How would you make it?

### Family

- What kind of things did Connor admire about his father? How has Connor used some his dad's traits to help him? (Hint: Look at the basketball challenge between Andrew and Connor)
- How does his mother's attitude to his school work versus his comic book art change over the book? Why?

### Popular Music

- Make a fan club for your favourite band or performer. What kind of experiences would make you as crazy as Mandy's love for 5YOW?

•



## FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



*Con-nerd*  
by Oliver Phommavanh

**Why this story?** This is the previous book that begins the story of our character Con-nerd, continued in *Super Con-nerd*

Hilarious story about finding your own special talents and having the confidence to use them.

*Teachers' resources available.*



*Thai-riffic*  
by Oliver Phommavanh

**Why this story?** Another wonderful story about starting high school by Oliver Phommavanh

Lengy is Thai and he lives with his family about the Thai restaurant that his parents run, called Thai-riffic. A book about growing up in two cultures: the culture of your origins and that of the country where you live and trying to work out where you fit in.

*Teachers' resources available.*



*The Other Christy*  
by Oliver Phommavanh

**Why this story?** Another wonderful story by Oliver Phommavanh, this time with girls as the main characters.

A touching and funny tale about quirky families, sweet desserts and two girls who find out they have a lot more in common than just their name.

*Teachers' resources available.*

## ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
<i>Super Con-nerd</i>	<b>Oliver Phommavanh</b>	9780143306535	<b>5-7</b>	<b>\$16.99</b>		
<i>Con-nerd</i>	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143304869	5-7	\$16.99		
<i>Thai-riffic</i>	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143304852	5-7	\$16.99		
<i>Thai-nomite</i>	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143306528	5-7	\$16.99		
<i>The Other Christy</i>	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143505723	5-7	\$16.99		
<i>Punchlines</i>	Oliver Phommavanh	9780143306511	7-9	\$16.99		
<b>TOTAL</b>						

PLEASE NOTE THAT PRICES ARE RECOMMENDED RETAIL ONLY AND MAY HAVE CHANGED SINCE THE TIME OF PRINTING. PRICES ARE GST INCLUSIVE.

NAME: _____ SCHOOL: _____ ADDRESS: _____ STATE: _____ POSTCODE: _____ TEL: _____ EMAIL: _____ ACCOUNT NO.: _____ PURCHASE ORDER NO.: _____	PLEASE SEND ORDER FORMS TO YOUR LOCAL EDUCATION SUPPLIER.
--	---

